



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



August 7, 2008

Bruce W. McClendon FAICP
Director of Planning

TO: Harold V. Helsley, Chair
Leslie G. Bellamy, Vice Chair
Esther L. Valadez, Commissioner
Wayne Rew, Commissioner
Pat Modugno, Commissioner

FROM: Mitch Glaser, AICP, Supervising Regional Planner *MG*
Countywide Studies Section

SUBJECT: AUGUST 20, 2008 – AGENDA ITEM #8
PROJECT NO. 2008-00088-(5)
AMENDMENT TO TITLE 22 (ZONING ORDINANCE) TO AMEND THE
LA CRESCENTA-MONTROSE COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT

BACKGROUND

Foothill Boulevard is the primary commercial corridor in the unincorporated community of La Crescenta-Montrose, home to a variety of retail and service businesses. Over the course of several years, the Foothill Design Committee of the Crescenta Valley Town Council formulated a series of design standards for future development along the corridor. The purpose of these standards is to establish a cohesive identity for Foothill Boulevard through comprehensive site planning and design practices that acknowledge the unique character of the surrounding community.

In January 2007, the Foothill Design Committee submitted its design standards to the Countywide Studies Section for review and comment. Subsequently, staff worked with the Committee to reorganize the standards into an ordinance format and clarify various terms and provisions to ensure consistency with Zoning Ordinance terminology. On October 10, 2007, staff and the Foothill Design Committee presented the design standards to your Commission and requested that a public hearing be initiated. Your Commission granted the request and directed staff to conduct additional community outreach, as well as consultation with the Department's Land Use Regulation Division and the Building and Safety Division of the Department of Public Works, before the public hearing.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Pursuant to your Commission's directive, a public meeting was held in the community on November 13, 2007 at which staff and the Foothill Design Committee presented the

Design standards and solicited comment. In preparation for the meeting, more than 6,500 notices were sent to all property owners within unincorporated La Crescenta-Montrose as well as all businesses within the Foothill Boulevard corridor.

The meeting was attended by approximately 75 people, the great majority of which expressed support for the design standards. A survey was distributed at the meeting; 86% of respondents indicated they were "disappointed" or "very disappointed" with the current look of Foothill Boulevard and 87% of respondents supported adoption of the standards as presented or with minor revisions. However, a few property owners expressed concerns related to the issue of additional restrictions on the use of their property, especially the potential costs they may incur in designing and constructing projects that comply with the standards.

CONSULTATION

Pursuant to your Commission's directive, the design standards were distributed to the Department's Land Use Regulation Division and the Building and Safety Division of the Department of Public Works. Staff responsible for implementation and enforcement of the standards expressed concerns over their complexity and specificity. The extensive use of architectural terminology and the lack of visual references were of particular concern, as planners, engineers, and building inspectors are not trained in architecture and may therefore encounter difficulty in reviewing and approving development projects along the Foothill Boulevard corridor.

To address concerns regarding implementation and enforcement, the proposed ordinance requires that plans be prepared by a licensed architect and/or landscape architect and that a licensed architect submit certification that all construction complies with approved plans before most building inspections are conducted. On July 21, 2008 staff met with a licensed architect active in the Crescenta Valley who indicated that the certification requirement was reasonable and feasible.

In addition, the Foothill Design Committee has prepared a separate Design Guidelines document intended to serve as a supplement to the proposed ordinance. The Design Guidelines document elaborates on the design standards within the proposed ordinance and provides visual references in order to assist property owners, architects, and planners in understanding how they should be applied to development projects.

COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT AMENDMENT

The La Crescenta-Montrose Community Standards District (CSD) was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 30, 2007 and currently contains provisions related to multi-family uses in the R-3 (Limited Multiple Residence) zone. The proposed ordinance would amend the CSD to include Area-specific Development Standards for development within the Foothill Boulevard corridor. These Area-specific Development

Standards regulate all aspects of project design, from site layout to building materials to landscaping and signage, and are generally far more specific and restrictive than the Zoning Ordinance provisions currently in place.

CONSISTENCY WITH GENERAL PLAN

General Plan policies encourage guidelines governing scale and design on a community-by-community basis. The proposed ordinance is therefore consistent with the General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

Staff prepared an Initial Study for this project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and the environmental reporting procedures of the County of Los Angeles. The Initial Study showed that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment. Based on the Initial Study, a Negative Declaration has been prepared for this project.

The environmental document was made available to responsible agencies and the public for the required 30-day review period. One comment on the environmental document had been received at the time this staff report was prepared.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the Regional Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution and forward proposed Project No. 2008-00088-(5) to the Board of Supervisors for consideration in a public hearing.

Please find all pertinent documents attached. Should you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 974-6476 or mglaser@planning.lacounty.gov.

MG:mwg

Attachments:

1. Resolution for Commission Adoption
2. Ordinance for Commission Adoption
3. Initial Study and Negative Declaration
4. Design Guidelines Document
5. Survey Results
6. Comment Letter on Negative Declaration
7. Comment Letter on Ordinance